

VZCZCXRO5168
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #0504/01 0741237
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 141237Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5593
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000504

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

EEB FOR A/S SULLIVAN
EUR FOR DAS BRYZA
EEB FOR MANN
DOE FOR HEGBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2018

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [EPET](#) [TU](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY PREVIEWS MARCH 24-25 BERDIMUHAMEDOV VISIT

Classified By: Economic Counselor Dale Eppler for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary. The GOT is prepared to encourage Turkmenistan to open its energy sector to foreign investment and work with Western energy companies during Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov's March 24-25 visit. A lack of enthusiasm from the Turkmen side has forced the Turks to pull-back on their idea for a Turkmen-Azeri-Turk energy trilateral, even as they had started to lay the groundwork. The GOT supports the idea of linking Azeri-Turkmen offshore production as concrete first step toward developing a trans-Caspian pipeline, but is undecided whether it will address the idea with Berdimuhamedov during his visit. Developing trade and economic relations will otherwise dominate the agenda. Turkey is also pushing hard for Turkmenistan's endorsement of a Turkic nations summit with a permanent secretariat; Turkmenistan has been so far unenthusiastic. End Summary.

12. (C) We discussed with MFA Department Head for Central Asia Sule Gurel and Department Head for Energy Berris Ekinci, March 12, important energy related messages that could be conveyed to Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov during his March 24-25 visit to Turkey. We told the Turks that Eurasian Energy Coordinator Mann communicated the following points to Berdimuhamedov during his February 28 visit and we would appreciate Turkish support on these themes.

-- It is time for Turkmenistan to balance its energy sector relations.

-- The way to do this is open the energy sector to foreign investment, develop new technologies, and reach out to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

-- Caspian Sea delimitation can wait; cooperation on linking offshore Turkmen and Azeri gas platforms is a concrete step that can be taken now.

13. (C) Gurel and Ekinci appreciated our sharing these messages and said they would forward them to more senior levels for consideration. Ekinci made clear that opening Turkmenistan to foreign investment and working with Western energy companies already featured prominently in the GOT's energy briefing papers for the Berdimuhamedov visit. She said the GOT was still considering whether it could

specifically address linking Turkmen and Azeri offshore gas fields during Berdimuhamedov's visit. Gurel said President Gul wanted to host a Turkmen-Azeri-Turk energy trilateral, and the Turks had started to lay the ground work for one in Antalya. But, implying that the Turkmen were not ready, Gurel said the GOT has since abandoned the trilateral as part of this visit and she is unsure whether it will be rescheduled.

14. (C) Gurel previewed Berdimuhamedov's two-day visit. (The cancellation of the proposed energy trilateral appears to have precluded the four-day visit the Turks had initially anticipated.) The GOT hopes the visit, coming on the heels of President Gul's January 2008 visit to Ashgabat, will further "repair bilateral relations" and lead to new energy, trade and transportation cooperation. The two sides are presently negotiating agreements on economic cooperation; establishing regular, bilateral political consultations; and cooperation between the two countries' national television broadcasters. Key for Turkey is a joint declaration in which it seeks to gain Turkmenistan's endorsement of a Turkic nations summit, with a permanent secretariat. Turkmenistan supports bilateral parliamentary exchanges with Turkey, but Gurel described Turkmenistan (and Uzbekistan) as unenthusiastic, so far, with the Turkish proposal. Neither Turkmenistan nor Uzbekistan participated in the last Turkic summit, in Ankara in February, or in the last Turkic parliamentary summit in Antalya, also in February. The next summit will be held in Baku in June; ensuring Turkmen and Uzbek participation will be a high priority for Turkey.

15. (C) Gurel said the Turks hope to use the visit to improve transportation connections between the two countries, which are key to strengthening trade relations. Turkmenistan is a

ANKARA 00000504 002 OF 002

gateway for Turkey to the rest of Central Asia and she noted that Turkish truck drivers have faced "problems" there. The Turks will propose an intergovernmental transportation commission to resolve these issues. She added that Berdimuhamedov had specifically requested a visit to a MANAS (Turkish-German consortium) bus factory in Istanbul, indicating the priority he places on building Turkmenistan's transportation infrastructure.

16. (C) According to a bemused Gurel, Berdimuhamedov is attaching great importance to a joint cultural concert to be held in Istanbul, March 25, as a symbol of strong cultural bonds. About a hundred Turkmen dancers will come to Istanbul to perform. She said the Turkmen have requested huge banners of the two Presidents be displayed at the event, which has left the Turks in a bit of a scramble; giant portraits of President Gul just don't exist (such hagiography being reserved strictly for Ataturk in this country).

17. (C) We noted that educational exchanges did not appear to be featured prominently on the agenda as they often are for other visits involving Turkey. Gurel described these ties as already strong. While she did not have a precise figure, she said numerous Turkmen students study at Turkish universities, many on Turkish scholarships. One Turkish school, attached to the Turkish Ministry of Education, and the large network of Turkish NGO-run schools in Turkmenistan, all operate comfortably, she said.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

WILSON